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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. On the occasion of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions take this opportunity to express our unequivocal support for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century). We mark our commitment to and continued affirmation of the struggle for the full recognition and fulfilment of women's human rights and security in all spheres and continue to work to ensure the participation of women in achieving those goals.

2. We recognize and applaud the efforts prior to and beyond the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to ensure and enhance women's equal participation in all decision-making processes. They extend from the recognition in article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the right of equal political participation, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the basis provided in articles 4, 7 and 8 thereof for initiatives to enhance women's equal participation in all areas of public life, to the urging by the Security Council in its resolution 1325 (2000) that Member States ensure increased representation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and General Assembly resolution 58/142 on women and political participation as well as the reiteration in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the reviews thereof that women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

3. We congratulate the General Assembly on its strong and unanimous support for the system-wide coherence resolution to create a new gender equality entity to be headed by a new Under-Secretary-General. In so doing, the General Assembly endorsed the efforts of women and their allies from around the world who have been advocating for three years for a stronger, better resourced agency on gender equality and women's empowerment. We look forward to the creation of this agency in early 2010, the fifteenth anniversary of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. In support of this agency, we similarly urge Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to begin immediately the recruitment process to appoint a strong leader grounded in women's rights and gender equality as the Under-Secretary-General who will lead this process of consolidating the four existing gender entities so that the appointee will be in place, and the new gender equality entity can be operational, by the time of the Beijing +15 review at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010.

4. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and Women's Action for New Directions likewise applaud the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1888 (2009) (to end violence against women) and 1889 (2009) (on women, peace and security). It is significant that resolution 1888 (2009) calls for the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative to lead and drive the work of the United Nations on addressing sexual violence in conflict. We believe it is vital for that Special Representative to have a holistic mandate that deals with the issue of sexual violence in the full context of women, peace and security, and we urge the United

Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to maintain the recognition reflected by it in its resolution 1889 (2009) that both of its recent resolutions are component parts of a larger and inseparable agenda for women, peace and security.

5. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions remind the Security Council that in addressing sexual violence it is important not to see women as either victims or agents of change. Rather, it is vital to understand that women, as powerful agents for peace, conflict resolution and change, may be at risk of sexual violence, and that those victimized by such violence do not as a consequence lose their power, voice or ability to participate as peacebuilders in their communities. We look forward to working with a Special Representative of the Secretary-General who understands and advocates this holistic approach and who works to address issues of protection from sexual violence in their full context of participation, empowerment, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This approach would take full advantage of the important groundwork laid by the Security Council in its resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), as well as the support and resources offered by a panoply of civil society groups eager to help the United Nations implement its agenda on women, peace and security.

6. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions further call on Member States to implement the Millennium Development Goals and broader development goals in a gender-centred manner, without which, 15 years beyond the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the full and effective participation of women remains severely restricted.

7. The full and effective participation of women in security decision-making forums continues to be exceptionally limited at both the local and global levels. While some attempts have been made to increase women's participation at the local level through enhanced training of peacekeepers and a gender mainstreaming action plan that calls for the recognition of women as actors in conflict situations, the Security Council still has only a single woman sitting at the Ambassador level. Member States share the responsibility for putting forward strong female as well as male candidates to these and other positions that carry increasing political power and influence.

8. We find it unacceptable that access to opportunities to work under humane and fair conditions and access to clean water and sanitation, health services and education remain beyond the reach of most women. We do not agree with the commodification and privatization of those essential services, especially in the light of the resultant disproportionate negative impact on women of such policies. Unequal access to resources and the resultant unequal economic power and persistent and pervasive underdevelopment is a form of violence in and of itself and, further, makes women particularly vulnerable to violence during both conflict and so-called times of peace. Without inclusive and sustainable development based on a system of gender equality, true and sustainable peace is impossible. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions call upon all States to therefore include a holistic gender perspective when allocating resources and developing programmes to implement the Millennium Development Goals and any other development

practices or projects and insists that the Commission on the Status of Women urge them to do so.

9. We call on Member States to act urgently to ensure that women and men have fair and equal access to natural, economic and political resources so as to ensure equal participation in decision-making in the various areas of public and private life, including participation in development. We call on governments to ensure that marginalized women, including widows, indigenous, disabled and minority women, are included in programmes and processes designed to improve and enhance the access of women to those resources.

10. We recognize that the participation of women in decision-making at all levels includes taking part in decisions involving the economy and trade and that the disproportionate negative effects of globalization on women makes their input in the decision-making of supranational institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the other Bretton Woods institutions, vital. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions call on Member States to provide mechanisms by which women are guaranteed an opportunity to provide input into the decision-making processes of those institutions at a local level and that those processes take into account the particular needs of women.

11. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions reaffirm our commitment to work for collective human security and sustainable peace in collaboration with civil society and governmental and international actors, including within the United Nations system. We look forward to working with others around the world to dismantle the prevailing culture of militarism and create a culture of peace in which racism and discrimination, economic injustice, violence and every form of oppression are absent and in which women are full and equal participants.